

Good morning,

I will be testifying verbally for HB 6374. Here is a copy of my testimony.

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott and distinguished members of the committee:

Good morning. Thank you all for being here. My name is Zoe Bertone and I am a student at Connecticut College. I live in New London and am a constituent of Representatives Cruz and Nolan and Senator Formica. Today, I am testifying in favor of **HB 6374**, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct On College Campuses.

For the past hour, you have now heard from legislators and higher education administrators. I am testifying right now to remind you that, above all else, you must listen to and act upon the demands of *students*.

My college experience was unimaginably altered by sexual violence during my first year of college. Following this traumatic attack, I suffered immense physical, emotional, and psychological repercussions for the next few years. Yet, my experience is unfortunately not unique or unheard of. Most of my peers have had an experience similar to mine. Sexual violence is occurring at every college in our state.

This could have been prevented. Sexual violence on college campuses is preventable with legislation such as ours. The *biennial* campus climate survey provision in this bill would have better equipped my college to understand and thus prevent my and others' instances of violence. This specific frequency would allow my university to actually act upon my insights during my time of studies. Since the creation of this bill last year, the need for more accurate data and resources has become far more apparent. As some of you may be aware, this summer, almost every Connecticut university had a survivors page where survivors could share their stories. For many, this was their first time sharing their story, and many of them expressed a want and a need for more from their university, and from their states. Many of these survivors also felt like they were able to speak through the anonymity of the Instagram account. The campus climate survey provides survivors with a better avenue to report their experiences anonymously while being supported by their university. The amnesty policy embedded in this bill would have expanded the breadth of resources readily accessible to me in the wake of my experiences.

So I urge you to support survivors around our state and join our fight so that no one has to experience what I did. Every single day that the bill sits, another student's life will be indescribably altered, just as mine two years ago. Thank you all for taking the time to hear my story. Members of the Higher Educational Committee, please vote this bill out of committee as soon as possible. Students in Connecticut need these protections.

Best,
Zoe

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Zoe Bertone

(she/her)

Connecticut College '22

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